The Shooting Times and Country Magazine—June 24, 1955

BISLEY—1955 AND THE FUTURE by Colonel Langford LLoyd

The SHOOTING TIMES
and Country Magazine

SEVENTY-THIRD YEAR | FRIDAY, JUNE 24th, 1955 | 1s. 3d. WEEKLY

THE SMITHY

The Brown Hare

(Lepus europaeus)

The Common or Brown Hare is a native of these islands, and not an "import" like the rabbit. The Brown Hare has two cousins—the Blue Hare and the Irish Hare, both sub-species of *Lepus timidus*.

Centuries ago the hare was regarded with great suspicion—often as a "melancolicke" beast of evil omen, sometimes as a witch in disguise. At the time of the Roman Conquest it was not considered fit to eat, and even in 1600 it was said by a certain Dr. Venner that the eating of too many hares "breeds incubus and causes fearfull dreams"—though probably no worse than those caused by the sanguinolent and vinous jugged hare of today.

Earlier writers, from Pliny to Buffon, have put forward such varying views as that all hares were females, that their sexes were interchangeable and that the bucks could give birth to young. The present-day puss presents little mystery to the naturalist, except perhaps in her habit of eating certain of her droppings (or crottels as they are properly called) whilst lying up in her form during the day. Her normal food, which shows a distinct preference for swedes, carrots, clover and young wheat, is mostly taken at night.

Leverets can be born at almost any time of the year, though the usual breeding months are February and March, when the bucks are to be seen gambolling and clowning about—often oblivious of onlookers. Litters commonly vary from two to five. When they are born, the young are distributed in several forms and suckled separately. How long wild hares live is difficult to know, but the poet Cowper's famous tame hare died of old age in her twelfth year.

Adult hares weigh between seven and nine pounds, but there is a record of one turning the scales at something over thirteen pounds — undoubtedly a source of "fearfull dreams"!

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THE SHOOTING TIMES
and Country Magazine
Published every Friday by
THE BURLINGTON PUBLISHING CO (1942) LTD
29 OLD BOND STREET
LONDON W1
'Phone: HYDe Park 2556 2557

No. 3798 FRIDAY, JUNE 24, 1955 Founded 1882

NOTES AND COMMENTS

ALL true lovers of the countryside will feel concern over the matter of the 29th Annual Report (1954-55) of the Council for the Preservation of Rural England, in which an attack is made on the attitude of area electricity boards towards the use of overhead transmission lines. As will be generally known, the Queen is patron of the Council, and the Duke of Norfolk president.

The report expresses "growing concern among all who have the landscape beauty of our country at heart" over lack of adequate consideration for landscape amenities which existing policy appeared to foster. "If the boards are permitted to evade their responsibility in national parks, other parts of the country where consideration of landscape amenity are just as important will receive even scantier consideration." Referring to a report of the National Parks Commission which states that area boards as a whole are not unresponsive to the claims of amenities, the Council's report states: "The measure of their response can be gauged by the extent of the disfigurement from overhead transmission lines all over the country. Overhead lines are being erected everywhere, in many cases with deplorable results to the landscape amenities of rural districts. It has always been the view of the Council that the benefit of electricity should be brought as speedily as possible to the rural districts. It has equally been our view that this should be done in a manner which respects the natural beauty of our landscape." This involved the use of certain lengths of underground transmission and most local authorities shared this view.

Continuing, the report states: "The area boards appear to be a law unto themselves in these matters, but the time has surely come for some sort of policy settlement on a national basis." All too often the local authorities were confronted by the area board with the abandonment of a scheme if they persisted in asking for an underground cable. Referring to the North-Western Electricity Board's plans for overhead lines in Borrowdale and Ullswater, Lake District, the report states: "The cost of placing underground this low tension distribution is infinitesimal compared with the overall expenditure of the Board." Another matter to which the Report calls attention is the increasing use by highway authorities of the toxic spray method of killing weeds and undergrowth on road verges.

As the Duke of Norfolk has previously stated, the battle for the preservation of rural England seems to be a losing one. However all is not yet lost and every effort must be made to preserve the beauty which our country can still offer. One of our great and increasing troubles lies in our vast population concentrated in this small island, and of course the demands made by housing projects, airports, training camps and other matters of that kind. In this respect the last war has dealt a heavy blow and it is surely one from which only partial recovery may be expected. In the last forty years or so this island has become an almost totally different place, so that comparatively few knew it as it used to be.

All the same it is disappointing to find that relatively few people really appreciate what true rural life means. And what is not appreciated soon ceases to be needed. Education along the right lines and information are indicated.

* * *

HEDGEROW GROWTHS

Those who live in areas from which myxomatosis has entirely cleared the rabbit population are now viewing with interest the changed state of lanes, banks and wayside strips. Much has been written about the increased productivity of fields now that rabbits no longer reduce to uselessness a wide swathe round the hedges, but little has been said about effects of the same cause upon hedges and wasteland. In places where rabbits were abundant, the neighbourhood of a warren was something of a desert, for, apart from what rabbits ate, their constant scratchings and the fouling of the ground discouraged much plant growth that now has a chance to flourish. All is covered in greenery, and banks that last year were of plain earth are now a mass of weeds and flowers. It is too early yet to say what plants will eventually gain dominance, but it could be an interesting study for the botanist.

SCOTS SMALL-BORE SHOOTING

Dundee and Strathmore, the Scottish team champions, completed an outstanding treble in the Scottish meeting of the National Small-Bore Rifle Association, which was held at St. Andrews by winning the Lord Forteriot Cup from Birmingham, whom they beat by one point with an aggregate of 799. They had previously won the Scottish championship and the I.C.I. Cup. Birmingham, who also held the New Zealand Cup, had to be content with second place in that event to Worplesdon who beat them by one point with an aggregate of 796. Mrs. J. J. Mackenzie, Dundee and Strathmore, successfully defended the Scottish women's championship, winning with 299, one point ahead of Miss J. M. Sinclair, Edinburgh Masonic. The Association's open competition was won by J. Hale, Birmingham, whose 300 was gauged by the judges to be the best of seven at that figure. The most consistent shooting in the class A event was by T. J. Knight, Birmingham, who won the Nobel aggregate statuette with 1,596. In the international shoot England beat Scotland by 12 points, the aggregate being: England 2,973; Scotland 2,961.

MEERKATS

The insatiable appetite of the British people for something new in the way of a pet has led to an official warning in South Africa. A television broadcast featuring meerkats led to a demand for them in English pet shops which sent their price—if obtainable—rocketting to £45. The meerkat, or yellow mongoose, is found in several parts of the Union of South Africa, and authorities there are concerned lest the high prices offered locally for specimens send children in search of them. However charming they may look upon television, it is a regrettable fact that rabies is endemic among South African meerkats, and those people bitten when seeking them may well add to the increasing number of rabies victims in that country. The benevolent Government department in Britain that insists upon six months' quarantine for any immigrant dog is unlikely to admit a possibly rabid meerkat without taking precautions—even if it admits it at all.

FOOD OF SWIFTS

Swifts have always been ranked as beneficial birds, though little enough has been known with precision about their feeding habits. However, the latest *Journal of Animal Ecology* contains a paper with plenty of facts and figures about swifts feeding their young. They bring in anything up to 40 meals a day, and each meal normally consists of between 300 and 1,000 insects and spiders. An extraordinary variety of genera is taken, but aphids figure very largely in the analyses of those meals which were examined. Sometimes beekeepers have had doubts about swifts flying near their hives, but there is reassurance on that point. It is recalled that when eight swifts, seen flying round hives, were shot, the only bees found in them were stingless drones. This is justly enough considered to be striking evidence of the swift's capacity for visual discrimination. Incidentally, a very similar discovery in this last matter has been made in the case of swallows.

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Out and About

by Tower-Bird

THIS article is being penned on June 12, and we, of the south at least, are getting some queer old weather for the time of year. It is, during this period of short nights, that I find myself wide awake long before 4 a.m., and, a little later, when the early birds have started to sing, I can bear the feel of sheets no longer, and, for the next three hours, before setting out to work, I am restlessly afield with the gun after crows, pigeon, jays and jackdaws.

Of one thing I am becoming increasingly certain about the "decline of the partridge": whatever cause, or combination of causes, have so sorely "hit" the gamest of all our game birds, the serious menace of a rapidily increasing crow population is no aid to its welfare—an understatement which is well and truly an understatement. Before the leaves concealed the nests of crows, these could be seen, by even the less observant countryman, in almost any belt of trees, copse, wood, and in all too many single, isolated trees. The ordinary countryman would occasionally remark upon the fact, while any shooting man interested at all in game preservation, would bring up the subject every time he met a companion of similar interests.

Many of us believe that the crow is increasing even more rapidly than did the magpie, and no doubt the dwindling population of good keepers is the chief reason. But, when you get abroad really early as I do, when the grass is white with frost (as it was yesterday morning and on a morning before); when you get out into the open places—the marshes and so on—you will see the crows (and, indeed, all the corvine tribe) really going about the business of destroying the eggs and young of breeding birds, be they duck or linnets, before they set out to forage in the fields for other and sometimes more easily gathered fare.

At sun-up, they raid the trees, the bushes, and undergrowth, and, if you have, say, a large garden containing a number of nests of small birds, you will, far too often these days, find that these nests are robbed of eggs or young. And, of course, you will find your young cabbage stripped by pigeon, your peas picked and shelled by jays.

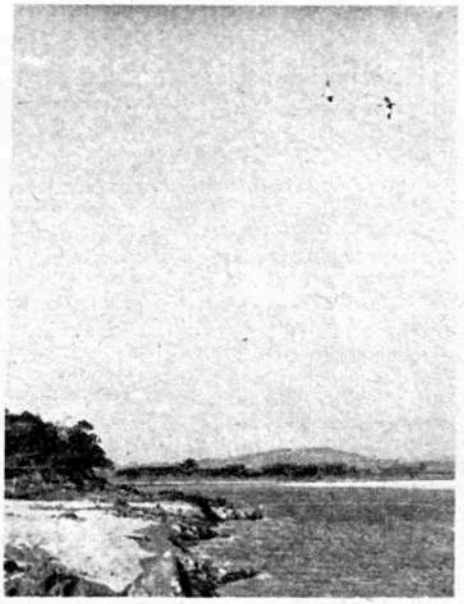
On a Duck Marsh at First Light

If you have a duck marsh, go at first light and conceal yourself at some good vantage point and watch the crows (and rooks) at work, quartering the reed-beds and dykes. Plover and redshank, larks, wagtails, and other birds show well enough that they are not blind to the objects of the sable birds, but all the mobbing in the world will not prevent a crow from destroying a nest of eggs once its sharp eyes have discovered it. And you can see the cunning devils sitting in a tree watching for birds to come off their nests to feed, or otherwise giving away their nesting sites.

So at dawn yesterday, as I made my way down to the edge of the marsh, I looked in on the way at my allotments, and an almighty wrath seized upon me. Like a good husband, I had allowed my wife a foot-wide strip down one side of the plot in which she had sowed a row of special mixed wallflower seeds. During the night, a mole had come from the marshy meadow on the other side of the low boundary hedge and had tunnelled the complete length of the row of seeds. An injury, this, to which the mole had added complete insult, for it had turned sharp left at the top of the drill, tunnelled a yard along the headland, then tunnelled its way back downhill under a fine row of newly-sprouted peas.

Hiding my (unloaded!) gun among the nettles which I had recently beheaded near a neighbouring plot (for vermin birds' are not the only eyes that are about at dawn), I galloped back home for a couple of mole-traps, and these I set in a mixture of sandy soil with the greatest of difficulty, for the mole run was far deeper than I had expected, and the "light loam" made it almost impossible for me to make a satisfactory job of it. This morning—a morning of driving rain and gale—I paid a visit to the scene, only to find one trap sprung (obviously by soil washed against the trigger by a miniature torrent); the other untouched. There was no sign of further mole-workings, but I set up the traps again at mid-day, on the way to my usual Sunday 12 o'clock session.

To return to yesterday, my fowling partner arrived (with hands blistered from boat-building, for a boat and trailer will be part of our kit next season) at 9 o'clock, and we did a tour of a certain inland marsh (the most forward brood of duck I have so far seen have almost reached flapper stage), then, after wetting our whistles, to drive down the dust and pollen in our throats, we headed for the coast, with but a short session with friends in Chichester, and finally reached a certain quiet estuary—quiet only in the sense that no human was to be seen and only sailing boats in the very far distance.



Two "shellies" above the tideline.

A strong wind blew in from the Main and whipped the surface of a rising tide into small wavelets. On the edge of the saltings were many (too many, in my opinion) shelduck, and out on a small island a white sheet of gulls and more "shellies." A pair of merganzers swam just off shore, and Don, ranging out among the sea-pinks in flower and the usual saltings herbage, was led to the water's edge and then out among the waves by an old mallard whose brood crouched among the stalks and wrack.

Peaceful Interlude

I think that to sit down for an hour on a sun-warmed base of a sea-wall (ignoring the moving carpet of sand-hoppers) at this season, and with a powerful sea-breeze blowing into one's face; to look out over a wide, ruffled estuary; to watch at leisure through a 'scope the many and varied duck and gulls and waders; to discuss this and that with a companion whose mind is in perfect tune with one's own, and who has just bought a "packet of twenty" when you are down to "your last"—I think such an interlude takes a bit of beating. The air is not polluted with the exhaust fumes of internal combustion engines; there are no human beings to disturb the natural outlook—only grey wavelets breaking on the edge of the saltings and slowly running up the channels; only the far horizon with a few sails speeding against a background of water; only a blue sky filled with rapidly-moving white clouds and the gliding forms of gulls and the more purposeful flights of duck, occasional oyster-catchers, and the odd curlew and whimbrel.

Incidentally, I have never seen quite so many whimbrel at this time of year on the south coast before. And in the evening a friend told me of a spoonbill feeding among some gulls, and another friend of a single avocet feeding near a considerable flock of mixed small waders. The former friend seemed surprised at the presence of the spoonbill, believing that the appearance of such a visitor in June was most unusual. In fact, we expect to see the odd spoonbill any time between early spring and early autumn. May the present visitor escape the too-excited observations of bird-watchers; the avocet has already been seen by the cult.

I am not a sea-going man; at least, not when it comes to getting far out beyond the shore, but I cannot help wondering, from reports received from some of my fishing friends, whether porpoises are not increasing in inshore waters as crows are inland. One friend, fishing for black bream off Littlehampton watched over two-hundred porpoises of all sizes circling a great "gathering" of bream for hours on end—rather like wild Red Indians galloping round a camp of covered waggons. Some heaved up close to his boat (there she blows!) and he cursed those "innocents" for spoiling his sport. But I do not think that anyone has any real desire to harm the playful porpoise.

Shelduck and Mute Swans

Inland we wage deadly war on predatory birds, particularly the corvine tribe. Personally, I believe that two species of coastal bird (other than the big gulls, the cormorants, and the shags) could be thinned out a bit to good advantage, though in purely local areas. I stand to be shot at when I say there are far too many shelduck in some places, and that they make heavy inroads on duck-food generally. Certainly I do not like to see flocks of up to two-hundred and more in small areas where experiments are being carried out (as some of us have been carrying them out) in re-introducing *zos* grass.

But the bird I would like to see dramatically thinned out (again only in certain areas where they are in great numbers) is the mute swan. There were no less than seventy-seven in one small marsh "meadow" near here last week. They feed voraciously on those patches of tender "grass" to which the mallard and wigeon flocks come in autumn and winter, and the extent to which they foul the ground with their great droppings must be seen to be believed. I have watched a cob swan chivvy a flotilla of three-parts-grown Aylesbury duck up a ditch and slay a considerable number of them. I have seen them attack duckling broods time and again. The harm they do to the interests of fowlers and anglers is more than considerable, for they are great grass and weed-eaters, and weed is the nursery of insect life and the anchor for spawn such as the lace-work of perch.

A census is being taken of mute swans in this country. I only hope that it results finally in a decision at least to stem the increase of this elegant, bad-tempered, bird by taking its eggs, and I would like to bump off a number where they are far too numerous.

On the headkeeper's lawn at Ranworth Old Hall wild grey-lag geese and their family have a playground.

A Shooting Paradise—XXVIII

by J. Wentworth Day

WE climbed to the top of a tall wooden tower rocking in the wind, which commands the whole Broad. The Broad was running white with foam as parties of mallard, teal, pochard, and tufted duck whirled by. Scaup sometimes turn up in rough weather, and Colonel Cator shot a long-tailed duck *(Harelda glacialis)* on the Broad in about 1913, while Browne's father shot a little auk a good many years ago.

The little auk is not infrequently driven inland in stormy weather, but the occurrence of the long-tailed duck so far inland is remarkable. Personally, I have never seen them farther south than Holy Island, off the Northumberland coast, where, in 1935, I went several miles out to sea in a six-oared rowing-boat to obtain two specimens. They are purely a deep-sea diving duck, and largely confined to northern waters.

"We don't murder our duck," says Browne. "The Colonel doesn't believe in shooting everything that flies. Nor does he believe in making very big bags of duck. There are so many people within a few miles ranges who shoot hard on their flight-ponds, that if we shot the duck who come here for refuge at all heavily there would very soon be no stocks left. That is why we have only shot once this season.

"A good bag? Well, we reckon about a hundred to a hundred and fifty duck to four guns at a morning flight is good. They could, no doubt, shoot more, but the Colonel doesn't encourage it."

He added that, although the bearded-tit had not been known to nest at Ranworth, they were always seen up to the summer of 1946, but, following the very sharp winter, none were seen in 1947. The frost also killed all the water-rails, which formerly were very common. He had recently seen a couple, which pleased him immensely.

Ospreys and Harriers

The osprey which was seen at Horsey in June 1946; at Buckenham Broad, where Captain Wilson, the owner, told me he watched it for several days, fishing; at Cantley and elsewhere, also visited Ranworth and was seen by Colonel Cator. Harriers of the three different species are seen fairly commonly on the Ranworth Marshes, but apparently do not breed there.

Dick Browne lives in Ranworth Old Hall. Part of it was built about 1600 with an embattled porch in old mellowed red brick, and a later addition marries quite amiably with the older reed-thatched half of the house. Here dwells the headkeeper, his bedroom windows overlooking the Broad. His lawn is a playground for two wild greylag geese, who have been part of the family for the last fourteen years, and a cock pheasant who was brought up under a hen. All three feed with the domestic poultry, and make a fine, free friendship of bird-life with the ornamental duck which beautify the Broad. There are carolinas, mandarins, wood duck, and half-a-dozen species, with, a year or two ago, a brood of young shelduck who were raised under a hen from a clutch of eggs extracted from a rabbit's burrow not far from Southend-on-Sea — for the shelduck breeds in disused rabbit burrows. When the ducklings hatched, tiny balls of down, Dick Browne could get five of them at once on the palm of his outstretched hand.

Otters and Wildfowl

"I don't know who loves birds the most, my wife or me," said he rather shyly, for he is a shy, quiet sort of man who would not tell you much about himself in any case. "But my wife puts up with more than most women, I think. One night when I heard rare to-do among the geese — a dark snowy night — and rushed out in gum-boots and pyjamas, I found a big otter had got into the pen, killed one young goose, and badly wounded another. I brought the wounded bird back into the house, and, believe me, my wife took the poor thing to bed with her and cuddled it all night to keep it warm after I'd dressed its wounds. Now it's as strong as any of them and lays eggs regularly.

"The original wild geese came from the Solway fourteen years ago, but we've twenty-three of their descendants flying about round the Squire's place up at the Hall. They come to be fed regularly.

"One goose hatched out at Upton Broad one year, a couple of miles away, but, do you know, she swam home all the way back to our broad with her seven youngsters as soon as they were in the down. Last year the geese laid twelve eggs. The old gander is fourteen years old, in spite of the fact that he was nearly killed by an otter one night. I heard the hullabaloo, and rushed out and saved him just as he was being dragged off.

"It's no good people saying that otters don't kill wildfowl," he added; "they do. We're always having proof of it here. Why, one year an otter killed a hundred and twenty pounds' worth of ornamental duck.

"I like to see otters about, and I like to see the tawny owls who kept you awake the first night you got here. But that doesn't blind me to their faults. One of those old tawny owls killed twelve of our chickens in an hour, and my wife only saved the thirteenth by dressing its wounds and nursing it herself. Still, some vermin do good at certain periods. Take weasels, for example. At this time of year they kill any number of young rats. But in springtime they're the devil for young game birds. So are kestrel hawks for about a fortnight or three weeks in the breeding season. They kill young game birds just before they get into the down. After that they are pretty safe. The rest of the year the kestrel does a lot of good."

The Wicked Colonel

I asked Browne what he knew of the alleged ghost of Ranworth Broad—to wit, the spectre of the wicked Colonel, the Hon. Thomas Sidney, who, at one time, lived in that charming little mansion, Woodbastwick Old Hall, on the edge of the Broad, where now dwells Clare, the estate dairyman. Colonel Sidney was the authentic wicked squire. A port-drinking, hard-riding, hard-swearing, wife-beater and foxhunter, who considered it the height of fun to drink himself under the table each night.

He hunted on Sundays, and once, when he parson remonstrated with him for holding the meet outside the parish church, he cut the cleric down with his hunting-crop—treatment better suited to bureaucrats than to the inoffensive ministers of God.

The devil naturally cast a proprietorial eye upon this wicked squire. On December 31, 1770, Sidney held a meet of hounds at the Old Hall, with a hunt ball to follow in the evening. During the run hounds checked and lost at Coltishall, so Sidney and his field adjourned to the Rising Sun for a gallon of ale. There he laid a bet with another foxhunter that he would race him across country to Hoveton St. John. The gallon of beer was too much for the Colonel, who soon made a bad second. So he drew a pistol and shot the horse of the man ahead! After that he finished an easy first.

That night he rose to his feet to propose "Fox-hunting for ever and damnation to all else," at a banquet in the Old Hall, when a footman tapped him gently on the arm and said:

"Excuse me, sir, but there's a gentleman outside who wishes to see you."

"Tell him to go to hell," said the Colonel.

"Very good, sir," said the footman, and withdrew. He returned in a few moments. "He refuses to leave, sir, and says he must see you."

"Tell him to get to blazes, or I'll send him there," said the Colonel.

At that—and you were, of course, expecting this—the doors flew open, a tall, skinny man in a tight black robe strode in, gripped his bony fingers round Sidney's throat, lifted him from his chair, thrust him under his arm, cursing and swearing, and strode out again in a smoke-screen of brimstone fumes.

Outside, the black stranger leaped on to a seventeen-hands hunter, threw the Colonel across the pommel of his saddle, galloped down the drive, and across the Broad. Each time a hoof touched the water it hissed with steam! Thus Colonel Sidney went to Hell. And they

(Continued on following page)

Gun Gossip

by North Country

A READER has complained to me that towards the end of this last season his shooting, suddenly and for no apparent reason, deteriorated. Up to about Christmas he was doing very nicely—shooting as well as ever in spite of advancing years. Then he began to miss and he adds: "I made a fool of myself at our last covert shoot and I hardly feel like making a repetition of it (or taking the risk of doing so) when the season opens again. What, if anything, do you advise me to do?"

As I see it, his case is one which is fairly common to many of us and it should not give any cause for *undue* depression. I rather think that he is a bit too conscious of the fact that he is no longer young in years, and is reaching the stage when he will place the blame for all his failures (little or big) on this matter. This is, if I may say so a mistaken idea based on the belief that "anno domini" is bound to get the better of you after a certain age. This is a false notion which has been proved to be false over and over again. Because a man is slowed down a bit by increasing years, he has not necessarily got to shoot worse.

Shooting is a following which, above all, calls for experience. And in much of it experience is of greater practical use than extreme physical activity and fitness. Up to a point, anyway. The good shot knows where and how to stand, how to take his birds at the right point and with the minimum of effort. He may almost be compared to the seasoned boxer in the ring who makes his opponent do the "running around," reserving his energies for what really matters.

I doubt if this reader is really deteriorating. I suspect that he was just "off it" at the end of the season and there was no time left to make good again. There is, however, the chance that his eyesight may have changed in some way and it might be advisable for him to have this checked up. A relative of mine, when in the sixties, experienced rather similar trouble.

Circumstances, I suppose, alter cases, but I have lately been disappointed to find that one or two friends of my youth have now deserted the gun for the rod. One of them certainly was a good shot and might have become first-class. But now he is a fisherman almost exclusively. After a lapse of many years I met him and expected to hear all about the shooting he had done. But no—it was all about fishing. Much though I respect the followers of the contemplative art and much though I like fishing, I greatly prefer to shoot. A gun means far more to me than the best of rods—it always has done so and it always will.

Well, I believe that this is largely a matter of convenience. Facilities for shooting may remain unchanged, but a shooter's circumstances are these days continually altering and other habits are forced upon him. Then he finds that fishing is an excellent sport and so he settles down to fish. Or of course the reverse may happen. What I do notice particularly is that when a man goes over to fishing in middle life, he seldom returns. But I do know that much of this is simply due to circumstances. And since the latter have been scarcely comfortable these last 15 years or so, changes have to be expected. All the same I am sorry when a friend gives up the gun. Many a busy man, I know, cannot find time both to shoot and fish. And, I suppose, it is easier for a man to fish than to shoot.

So many of my relations have been good with both rod and gun that I have perhaps rather taken it for granted that both these great sports could be followed at will. I fear, though, that matters are not so simple as that today. To follow both sports freely you need now to be exceptionally fortunate. So, as the nett result, we find people settling for one or the other and considering themselves lucky to be able to do that much!

In my own circle of relations the one who is the best shot is also the best fisherman. He is, I think I can say, nearly first-class at both these sports. But as matters are, he has been lucky. Many of us today never enjoy sufficient practice at either sport. So our potentialities are not developed and nobody can say what might have been. A lot of skill thus goes to seed.

☆ ☆ ☆

A Shooting Paradise

(Continued from previous page)

say that you may see this abduction repeated on the night of each December 31.

"Well," said Dick Browne, with a grin, "I've never seen it, but some say they have. They swear they've seen queer lights on the waters at night. There's a lady here who's watched for it several times. As for that other ghost, the old monk who's supposed to row up the dyke from St. Benet's Abbey to paint the screen in the church, well, I've never seen him either, or his little dog who is supposed to travel in the boat with him, and I don't know anyone else who has. But there, there's always a lot of people who like to believe in these things. I'd sooner believe in b i r d s. They're prettier to look at."

After that we went up to look at the church wherein the ghostly monk, Pacificus, is supposed to have restored and redecorated the rood-screen in 1538.

Now, Ranworth Church is, of all Broadland churches, the loveliest. It stands on a little hill, gazing out over the thatched roofs of the tiny village, across the shining waters of the Broad, to the grey and ghostly ruins of St. Benet's Abbey, in the far marshes. It has a lofty tower, a noble chancel, partly thatched. Within, what was once, fifty years ago, a partly ruined interior, dripping with rain and stained with whitewash, is now a cool, cathedral-like chancel decorated in the loveliest pastel shades. It is almost too good to be true.

From Ranworth church it is a short mile to South Walsham. Thither I went to see the Broad, a lovely sheet of water, bowered in trees, full of duck, its reed-beds noisy with pheasants. South Walsham is not a large Broad, and it is no place for sailing, since the trees blanket the wind, but with the village it makes a perfect picture of unspoiled England.

The estate, which used to belong to that splendid old Norfolk sportsman Sir Bartle Frere, is no more than about eight hundred acres, but it includes everything — a pleasant modern red-brick mansion of Elizabethan style with a good front elevation, looking over smooth lawns to a wooded arm of the Broad. The whole — Broad, woods, plantations, marshes, and farmland—is an epitome of all things desirable. It has recently been bought by Major the Hon. Henry Broughton, and thus is, fortunately, in good hands, for it would be easy for the speculative bungalow-builder to ruin such a charming corner of woodland and water.

Broadland harvest—carting thatching reeds cut from Horning Broad.

Two Churches in One Churchyard

South Walsham has two churches in the same churchyard, not, as the story goes, because they were built by two sisters, but for the prosaic reason that a heap of dry manure caught fire, set light to a house and barn, and ended by burning down half the church as well. However, no doubt the two sisters will endure, despite the truth.

There is another legend, probably as baseless, that, at midnight on every first of May, the Broad suddenly becomes full of Viking ships and the body of Oscar, the son of Saturn, is burned aboard his ship to a fanfare of the sea-kings' horns. There is a good inn in South Walsham, which is much more to the point, and it has a noble signboard of a ship in full sail.

After lunch my wife and I set out, in a snowstorm, to walk round the strictly preserved "flooded marsh" — the pride of the Ranworth estate, and probably the finest duck shoot in England. It lies at the end of a long, muddy lane shaded by oaks and great hollies, where cock pheasants sprang out of the hedge at every second step, and blackbirds fled from the winter berries. At the end of the lane, under a grove of tall oaks twined with ivy, where pigeon roost and owls snore, the marsh spreads, a wild brown plain of sighing reeds cut up by broad dykes.

Browne set us off along a path by a dyke-side up which in winter the reed-cutters' barges bear their great cargoes, piled high. Before the war sixteen marshmen were employed on these marshes, and thousands of sheathes of reeds and sedge were cut annually for thatching. Today only two marshmen can be found to do the job.

(To be concluded next week)

Kenneth Finch, 22, of Unity Street, Ipswich, was fined a total of £2 at Ipswich after pleading guilty to killing a skylark and using a gun without a licence. Mr. O. Goldsmith, prosecuting, said that a policeman saw Finch lying in a field with his gun to his shoulder. Before he could reach him Finch shot the lark.

Bob Cutler, one of the most successful crocodile shooters, works mainly at night, spotlight shooting. Here, on Lake Meed, he makes a kill, with a native behind him ready to thrust the harpoon into the reptile to prevent the body from sinking.

Crocodiles for Sport and Profit

by Edward Samuel

FROM time to time, reports have appeared in various publications suggesting that the hordes of crocodiles which infest the Northern Territory, the Gulf of Carpentaria country and the huge never-never outback of Northern Australia, are decreasing in numbers. In actual fact, the reverse is the case, for though many amateur sportsmen, as well as professional hunters, secure good bags of skins each year, reliable evidence proves that the huge estuarine crocodiles are as plentiful—if not more plentiful—than ever.

Some time ago, Australia's well-known Uranium mine at Rum Jungle was flooded by a huge inrush of water during the wet season, and when the flood subsided it was found that a number of the smaller Johnsonia crocodiles, which are peculiar to Australia, as well as four or five estuarine man-eating monsters, had occupied the flooded mines. It was found necessary to shoot them, a by no means easy task, before the mines could be pumped out and operations resumed.

Despite the Australian slang for crocodiles —'gator—there are no alligators in Australia. Crocodiles range from small fish-eating types to the huge 30ft. estuarine beast, whose diet ranges from dead cattle to any other food, provided it is sufficiently decomposed.

In Arnheim land, the aboriginals regard the crocodiles as their own personal property. Recently a wild tribe actually patrolled the crocodile-infested waters of their Territory to protect the crocodiles against the white man hunters. This is hardly to be wondered at, as in June and July of last year the aboriginals shipped to Darwin skins valued at over £1,200. Many natives have forsaken their canoes to hunt "proper fella white way," in flat-bottom punts with spotlights and rifles. Numerous white men in various parts of the Territory also make good money. In many cases the capital involved is only about £500 and the earnings fully £3,000 a year.

A Cunning Device

Ted Morey, a former member of the Northern Territory Mounted Police, and today a leading buffalo and crocodile shooter, has invented a cunning device of ropes and baits in which crocodiles enmesh themselves, and Morey shoots them at his leisure. Incidentally, he was one of the survivors of the Caledon Bay massacre in 1933, when a savage group of natives ambushed a police patrol.

A couple of years ago, a group of Melbourne sportsmen formed a crocodile shooting club. They established club headquarters in the Gulf of Carpentaria country by acquiring an old station homestead, and annually the members and those who join in the sport visit the club by 'plane from Sydney or Brisbane and have enjoyed very good sport on their expeditions. Although these expeditions are not cheap, they are not as expensive as one would imagine. Probably £50 (Australian) would cover the cost from the time of leaving the capital city, and a credit against this would be the value of skins secured, which, of course, depends upon the skill of the shooter.

This is not a luxury trip, but to many who have participated it has been a unique and enjoyable experience, with a spice of danger attached to it. There is real romance and many yarns attach to the experiences of the many professional crocodile shooters who every season still make a considerable profit by their operations.

Shooting By Night

Bob Cutler, a 31-year-old former member of the Royal Australian Air Force, works in a dinghy or canoe, with a spotlight, similar to a miner's light, strapped to his head. He stands in the bow; immediately behind him is a native harpooner and in the stern are two paddlers. The boat moves slowly over the dark waters of the lagoon, with Cutler sweeping the beam from side to side until it picks up a crocodile. In the light from the torch, the reptile's eyes glow like tiny red coals. As silently as possible the paddlers follow the direction of the beam. Cutler waits until they are two feet from the crocodile's head and then fires. The target to reach the brain is a spot only two inches in area. As soon as he fires he stands aside and the native, with all the strength and skill of a man who had spent a lifetime throwing spears, drive the harpoon into the crocodile. The rope attached to the harpoon prevents the dead reptile from sinking, and with the rope it is dragged to dry land.

The danger occurs if the rifleman misses the vulnerable two inches and succeeds only in wounding the crocodile. Then all hell is let loose as the crocodile thrashes around wildly, trying to kill anything and everything with its tail, its claws, and its snapping jaws. Cutler will long remember the excitement one night when a crocodile tried to climber into his canoe and he and his crew managed to escape after wading through the soggy mud of the shallow lagoon.

The professional shooters have equipped themselves with former Army trucks, most of which were built specially for the Northern Territory service during the Pacific war. With these, they are able to travel over the faint tracks of the crocodile country, bringing their harvest of salted skins back to Darwin, where agents of the tanning firms compete for the hides.

Today, the average skin brings about £4. Formerly, there was a market only for the skins of the estuarine crocodiles *(Crocodilius perosus)*. This reptile is a man-eater and likes to supplement its fish diet with wallaby, dingoes, and horses and cattle, when he can

(Continued on page 396, col. 2)

Lifting the body of the shot and harpooned crocodile into the boat.

MORNING FLIGHT . . .

by BB

AN afternoon reconnaissance on November 28 revealed large numbers of pinkfeet feeding on a ridge some eight miles inland of the sea. It was late when we made contact, about an hour before sunset, which is often a good time to spy geese for, like wild pigeon, they move about a good deal just before taking off for the night and are less cautious. They are also inclined to make a good deal more noise.

This question of noisy feeding geese is rather curious. There are times when they make no murmur, but often, especially at the end of a winter's afternoon, they begin to buzz, and this sound frequently betrays their whereabouts. I think much depends on whether they have been left undisturbed for a day or so; it also depends on the weather. On frosty, still afternoons they make more noise than on wild and windy days.

It was a little difficult to see exactly where our quarry was actually at feed. We did not want to put them all up, if we were to come on the following morning at first light, and when we began our spy we found that as they were on a hill-top close approach was unwise. Luckily for us, they were on land which belonged to a friend of ours and which adjoined our own ground, so there was no difficulty about permission.

To digress for a moment. This question of permission is a ticklish one. In Lincolnshire and elsewhere, on land which is recognised "goose ground," the stranger will be rebuffed if he approaches a farmer or landowner for a "go at the geese." As a place becomes well-known the farmers are pestered by would-be goose hunters asking for permission, so that soon the very sight of an approaching booted stranger raises the farmer's ire.

Privilege Abused

I cannot say that I blame them, for constant applications by complete strangers must be irritating. I have so often been told that once permission was given, but that the privilege was abused and game was shot. This is what ruins a good goose ground (from the wandering fowler's point of view) and that is why localities must be kept secret.

But to return to our reconnaissance. Mac, Charles and I sidled out from the stackyard on to a flooded lane. This lane was flanked by a meagre hedge and deep ditch. Puddles reflected the last of the sunset; a cold wind blew. Spying with the glass we could see parties of geese continually shuttling back and forth from an uncut field of wheat to a taty bottom beyond. Some geese appeared to be right among the uncut crops with just their long, grey necks showing above the straw from time to time. It looked highly promising for the morrow. We did not know then that the uncut portion was only half the width of the field; the other half had been cut before the coming of the great rains.

Nor did we realise that the bulk of the geese (there must have been a couple of thousand) were down on the taty bottom and not on the uncut crop. Nearer we could not go so we went back to the shooting brake and consulted Cockayne, the keeper, who knew the ground, as it marched with ours. He was of our opinion (wrongly as it turned out) that the geese would be on the uncut field in preference to the taty bottom, as there was a good deal of floodwater about and the mud would be heavy.

So back we went over the mountain, hardly able to wait for the dawn. As we neared the top of the pass we could see a few small bunches of geese coming with us a mile or so to the right. They were already leaving the feeding ground for the sand banks in the bay.

I think we all spent a restless night, with dreams fevered by visions of geese. Perhaps hunting men sleep lightly before a day with hounds when weather prospects are good. I know that all true fowlers do when every portent gives full promise of the most exciting things in store.

We were up soon after 6 a.m. on the 29th, to find a still dawn with a hint of frost. Not very good for the job, but one never knew. The keeper would have been in the way, so it was just us three who set out after a hasty gulp at the thermos and a sandwich or two. How dark it was! No glimmer, as yet, of dawn. The road wound on before us over the wild moorland, and many rabbits and hares hopped stupidly in the headlights glare. Up and up, turn right by the big fir woods where years ago I made a glorious skid which all but landed us in the ditch; on past the wild peat hags and massive boulders; on across the tumbling burn which sings eternally, summer and winter, down its canyon among the dark spruce; on until at last we turn down the rutted track which leads to the farm.

Here they come!—a few faint lines scratched against the dawn brightness of the sky.

Racing The Dawn

I noticed that, as we "de-vanned," that the east was flushing lemon rose, and realised that if we were to get under cover quickly we should have to hurry. This on the greasy, flooded track was not easy, burdened as we were with decoys, guns, and the usual fowlers' "tack." Yet how much depended on going to ground before the advent of the first goose. Nothing suspicious must be seen when the geese arrive with empty bellies! That is why, when possible, it is best to prepare your hides the day before. But when we reached the uncut field we found that apparently all one had to do was to lie down and "get into bed," pulling up the masses of rotting straw round one like a blanket. It seemed too easy; if I were a goose I would avoid this field!

The east grew bright with a still, cold dawn. Mac, Charles and I were soon hidden from sight. The decoys were out on the short stubble between us and the taty bottom. We were all set. In the straw we were as snug as snug. The day promised to be fine, no rain trickled down our necks; there was ample time to admire the coming of a new day. Wandering plover passed, a pheasant crowed and crowed again, a titupping in the straw betrayed the passage of a large hare which passed within a foot of my head.

Full Squadron Formations

Precisely at 7.50 (by which time the serrated rims of the mountains to the east were razor-sharp and steely blue) I saw, scratched against the dawn brightness of the sky, a few faint horizontal lines. These were the oncoming skeins in full squadron formations, heading for these two fields on the hill, on which we lay in wait. It was a thrilling moment. to watch them come looming ever larger as they veered and tacked until, when a mile distant, well over our own Moss, wings locked and paddles made ready to be lowered. They swept onwards, right overhead, still just out of shot, and, wheeling with many a loud cry and cackle, alighted on the taty bottom three hundred yards away. Bother! thought I, "that's done it, those geese will draw the others to them, unless we get small parties hedge-hopping across to us."

The next skein followed the first, and so did the third; not one came to our rich grain field where tons of delicious food lay open to the sky. The next lot was a little lower, and from this skein I dropped the leader. It hit the stubble with tremendous force and lay immovable; so dead it seemed that I did not stir.

At the report of the gun, the grand army was up and making away. Mac forsook the uncut stubble and hurried to the boundary hedge near the taty bottom, and there I saw him in the growing light working vigorously to make a hide. This was possibly a good move. Accordingly, we all hared across to the hedge, where we found a small, dry ditch and plenty of loose branches lying round, as the hedge had lately been laid.

It took about fifteen to twenty minutes to construct reasonable hides, and the job was barely finished when the next lot of geese arrived. We had, of course, moved the decoys to the taty bottom behind us. But how shy these newcomers were! They circled us and circled yet again, many thinking better of it and beating away westwards.

Mac had a couple of shots at a circling skein which brought our bag to three, which was quite satisfactory. One of these was only wing-tipped and it went back with Mac to Norfolk, where it has since recovered and has joined Mac's other pinks and greys which he keeps in his spacious orchard near the house.

As to the single goose which I had brought down on the stubble, and which I thought was dead, when I went to pick it up, it was gone, and I only found it after a long search, creeping up a furrow. I had neglected the well-known maxim that one must always pick a fallen goose.

Martindale Forest, home of red deer, is near Ullswater.

Round the Game Preserves

by David Imrie

WHEN schoolboy Brian Cole stopped me yesterday on Ullock Lonning as I was cycling home for lunch to announce that he had seen a "reindeer" during the forenoon, I had a moment of extreme amazement. According to my young friend, this strange animal had bounded over several meadow fences in front of the parental abode without effort; then as a fitting climax to a spectacular display, it had sailed over a combination of hedge and wide ditch like the winner of the Grand National and vanished into the swampy thicket of Ullock Moss. Between spasms of information Brian kept repeating that this was the first time that he had seen a reindeer; but I assured him, after he had described the creature, that he had seen a roe, which was perhaps not so "roe"mantic, but nevertheless very interesting, because deer do not frequent our coverts often, although they are well established now in the Forestry Commission woodlands only a few miles away.

The arrival of this little deer was really interesting in several ways. It had obviously been a wanderer on the bogland at the head of Bassenthwaite Lake in the first place, and had reached Ullock Moss by traversing a big patchwork of rushy meadows, crossing a busy main road, and ultimately bounding over the somewhat formidable fences of the arable land, where it was seen by Brian. All this happened in bright sunlight soon after 11 a.m. So (as often happens) we have to adjust our ideas of natural history. There was a timid animal, which could have reached a known sanctuary among the vast conifer woods on both sides of the valley much more easily than the comparatively small covert of Ullock Moss, yet it braved all those obstacles without hesitation to attain a doubtful goal; for it is unlikely to stop on my domain. At least, no deer has ever remained long enough here to be in danger from sportsmen. Excepting Ullock Moss, our coverts are always busy with forestry operations, or resounding with the noise of hikers from the numerous rights-of-way nearby; and roe deer like a good deal of sylvan peace within easy reach of grazing.

Coming of the Deer

It was the manner of this deer's coming that is worthy of mention, not the fact that it was looking for pastures new. Most observant countrymen know that, apart from the recognised feather migrants, many of the more sedentary species, both terrestrial and avian, produce individuals with the wanderlust; and, of course, severe weather conditions, the breeding instinct and congestion of a wild population may even force the homing types to migrate also, at least for a time. Occasionally, a bird or animal which has been compelled by adverse circumstances to search for food and shelter far from its native soil decides to stop permanently in its new surroundings, and another colony is created. This must have happened in the Forestry Commission woodlands in our valley, because roe were unknown here when I first came to the Lake District.

Spread Throughout Lakeland

It is perhaps rather surprising that red deer have not spread over all the Lakeland from their native forest in the neighbourhood of Ullswater. Certainly they may be found in fair numbers nowadays around Windermere and Thirlmere, but that is about the bounds of their migration from Martindale Forest, although there is no reason, from our point of view, why they should not colonise, say, Skiddaw Forest (a lonely grouse moor) or the fells of Whinlatter Pass. Only once has a red deer been recorded on my own domain, and that happened 20 years ago. A Scottish keeper, knowledgeable in the signs of "warrantable beasts," reported one day that he had seen the "slot" of a stag in our main covert. This information was received with some doubt by his mates, but the deer was seen later in the flesh. Then it disappeared like many other nomads of the wild. Yet, I repeat, that there are red deer at Thirlmere, which is barely six miles from here as the crow flies.

A parallel can be found in the case of blackgame. Those capricious game birds used to be seen frequently on Troutbeck Moor, about 10 miles away, and for all that I know they may still inhabit that area; but only twice have I seen an individual bird on my own ground. They both appeared in the springtime; so the mating urge would explain their wanderings. The first was a magnificent blackcock. It rose within shooting distance of my abode, and flew in front of the wild cherry trees, which were then in full blossom, towards Coledale over the shoulder of the fell. The second was a greyhen. I surprised her on the edge of a conifer plantation on Swinside Crag overlooking Newlands Valley, and as she rose over the spruces I saw her beautiful plumage clearly in the March sunlight. My employer hoped that she might remain to breed, but no one ever saw her again.

Preference for Areas

Sometimes we can guess accurately why certain animals and birds prefer one place to another, and why they are absent from places which apparently suit them. For instance, red grouse would be comparatively numerous on the fells in the interior of the Lake District, if they were not sanctuaries for vermin. I have possibly mentioned in the past that grouse were shot by my late employer on fells where a solitary grouse could hardly be found today, and that this happy state of affairs was due to intensive keepering. But sometimes we cannot find any reason for the absence of a species from a place which superficially seems to suit it. And blackgame are in this category. Even if every predator were eliminated in a district rich in the food of blackgame, we could still not guarantee that they would make a permanent home there. Even less could we guarantee that they would multiply significantly, if they did remain; for those big grouse are mysterious in their likes and dislikes.

In the rushy gills and the scrubby thickets on the fringes of certain Yorkshire moors blackgame probably enjoy ideal conditions for their existence, but they never become too common. On an odd occasion late in the season three or four may come over the butts with their smaller cousins, particularly in the Tan Hill area. On casual days several may be driven from the thickets of Gunnerside Gill and Mukerside; and that is just about the extent of blackgame shooting in a district seemingly well adapted for every need of the species. The same scarcity might be observed in nearly all of the blackgame habitats in Britain today, which are incidentally much fewer than they were a hundred years ago.

On the other hand, badgers appear to be more than holding their own, and in this corner of the Lake District they may eventually become a nuisance. About 20 years ago they were practically unknown; then one spring a fair number of rabbit stops were torn out by the direct method peculiar to Brock, but some time elapsed before I noticed an occupied sett. Since those days badgers have become strongly entrenched on both sides of the valley from the low country to Buttermere Hawse. It was only recently that I heard of this spearhead.

According to the tenant of a lonely farm up there, he and a friend had tried their two terriers into what they assumed to be a fox earth on Aiken Fell one day when hounds were out; but the little dogs, a pup and its mother, emerged in a few minutes without fuss. Then the hunters got a big surprise when a badger ambled from the hole, grabbed the pup between its forelegs, and tussled with it down the steep fellside. Luckily for the pup, the mother kept baiting the pugnacious badger, otherwise her offspring might have got a serious mauling.

Soon after the badgers arrived here I heard my first yaffle. Its ringing voice echoed through the coverts for a few days, then suddenly became silent. A few years later I heard the unfamiliar call again, and the yaffle is now a regular breeder with us. Why was it not always a regular breeder here? We do not know; for wild creatures have queer urges.

On the Game Farm . . .

by Joyce Eltringham

LOOKING back on this year's egg season which, by the time these notes appear, will be virtually over, we came to the conclusion that it had been an extremely difficult one, and that we had not enjoyed it—a regrettable fact, but true nevertheless. We cannot blame the weather entirely except that the very cold spell at the end of March and the beginning of April caused pheasants to be late in starting to lay, and we suffered from that late start all the way through. True, we fulfilled our orders, but often with a struggle, and occasionally it necessitated going through the pens in the middle of the day to collect a few more eggs for a certain order. We do not like running as close as this. Then the pure Mongolian cocks in the moveable pens started damaging the hens and the latter, in consequence, laid badly. We let them out of the pens, gave them a wider range, and after a while the "savagery" ceased.

Further trouble was in one of the block laying pens in which, nearly every day, we found one or two eaten eggs. This was obviously not the work of the pheasants, as is sometimes the case, but suspiciously like that of a rat; suspicions which were soon confirmed when we looked for, and found, a rat run leading into the pen, with, just outside, further evidence in the form of a few empty egg-shells underneath an upturned water trough. The rat, however, was not have its own way for long . . .

Then there was the rail strike which did *not* take place, and, later, the one which became a reality, by which time we were involved with not only the despatch of eggs, but of chicks and adults as well. Certainly in game-farming, as in everything else, you have to take the rough with the smooth, but in this year's egg season we felt we had had just a bit too much rough.

Export of Pheasant Chicks

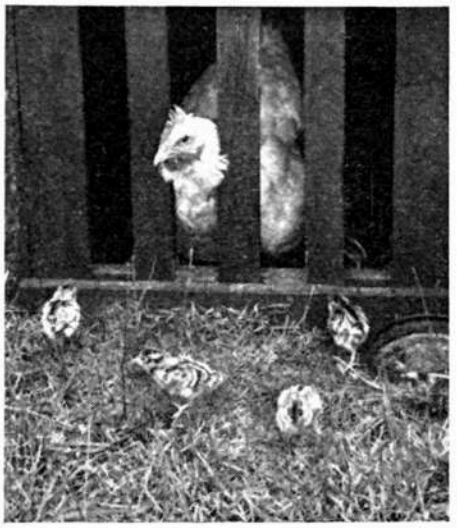
From eggs our attention turns to chicks. Each week batches of chipped eggs are brought from the nesting boxes for the hatching to be completed in the incubators; and each week pheasant chicks are packed and sent away to estates in the British Isles and abroad, or put out into our own rearing fields, where they have had to face up to the true English climate. The necessity for keeping them warm and dry during the first week or so of their lives has been our major concern.

In this connection the invaluable "broody" once again plays an important part, for if she broods them well, then half the battle of the early days is won; and when the rain comes down in torrents, accompanied by hail, thunder and icy winds, the chicks will instinctively seek the protection of the hen, which calls to them from the coop encouragingly. If they are wise, they will not emerge until the sun shines—or possibly until someone, himself soaked to the skin and cold, dutifully appears with the feeding bucket. Taking it all round, a chick's life is not a bad one.

Added to everything, we shall not quickly forget the night of May 17, when, ourselves sitting by a roaring fire and not even then being overwarm, we listened to and watched, the blizzard which raged across the countryside. Snow beat against our windows, soon to lie in a carpet on the ground; the wind raged in ever increasing fury — and our thoughts turned desperately to the young pheasant chicks in the rearing field. How could they survive such weather? The more we thought about it the more grim the picture became, until we went to bed visualising an entire rearing field wiped out.

The next day, in a more balanced frame of mind—for things never seem *quite* so bad in the mornings — we set about accessing the damage, irreparable and otherwise, which the blizzard had wrought. A thin covering of snow lay on the ground and an icy wind accompanied us as we visited the rearing field. As we had feared, in many cases the snow had driven into the coops, then melted, and the hen was standing in water, the chicks huddled dejectedly around her.

Later that day we picked up 59 dead, and the following day a further 50-odd had succumed to pneumonia. We could only give orders for the food to be changed a little, to contain more warming properties — and hope for the best. Nor was the trouble confined to the rearing field. In the covered aviaries several of the adult laying birds were found dead. We could presume only that, while roosting on the perches, they had been unable to withstand the gale and had been thrown to the ground. Never in our years of game-farming do we remember such conditions in May.



Encouragingly the hen calls from the confines of the coop.

Crocodiles for Sport and Profit

(Continued from page 393)

get them. He averages 15 to 25ft. in length, although the biggest ever shot was claimed to be 32ft. long. Buyers today, however, are eagerly buying any skins they can get.

During four months of the wet season it is too difficult to travel off the main roads, and most of the crocodile hunters have groundnut farms which they work during this period. Groundnut growing, too, is a lucrative business The men of the north are in the money.

Finally, it is interesting to note that the members of the Crocodile Shooter's Club previously mentioned, hold an annual dinner alternately in Melbourne and Sydney. Besides other dishes peculiar to the outback of Australia, the succulent portions of a crocodile feature on the menu. Some of the enthusiasts actually appear to enjoy this dish, which is hardly likely to earn popularity among those who appreciate the good things of the table. Certainly, however, this annual gathering is a hilarious one, and many yarns are spun of some of the experiences enjoyed in Australia's crocodile land.

Clay Pigeon Shooting

Fixture List

June 24 and 25: 21st Annual International Tournament, Collinstown, Dublin. Team matches between England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales, with Australia and New Zealand shooting by post, and British Open Individual Championship. Special Double-Rise event on Sunday, June 26. Under the auspices of the Irish Clay Pigeon Shooting Association (Hon. Secretary, Mr. P. McDonnell, 11 Foyle Road, Fairview, Dublin).

June 26: Coventry and District Dog and G.C. Warwickshire Down-the-Line Championships.

July 2: Birmingham G.C. Open Sporting Competitions. Worcestershire Down-the-Line Championship.

July 2: Lincolnshire Sporting Championship, West Pinchbeck G.C., near Spalding.

July 2: Taunton and Dist. G.C., Somerset. Open Shoot.

July 3: Harrogate G.C., Yorks. Members' Shoot, 1.45 p.m.

July 4 to 16: National Rifle Association's 86th Annual Imperial Meeting, Bisley Camp, Brookwood, Woking, Surrey. Daily Clay Pigeon Shooting events and practice (except Sunday, July 10).

July 6: Bowland and Dist. G.C., Sawley, Clitheroe. Evening practice.

* * *

Reports and Results

The Birmingham Gun Club announces an Open Sporting Competition of 50 birds to be held on July 2; also on the same date, the Worcestershire Down-the-Line Championship event, the latter event open to residents in Worcestershire only. The competitions will take place at the Midland Shooting School Ground at Brockhill Lane, Howell, nr. Redditch, a site which is equal distance Redditch-Bromsgrove, both competitions will start at 11 a.m. Entries will be accepted forthwith and up to 2.30 on the day; no entries after 2.30 p.m. will be accepted.

The British Broadcasting Corporation have been approached and we understand their recording unit will be in attendance. A car park will be provided for the use of competitors and visitors.

The Waltham Abbey Gun Club held their first evening shoot on May 25, when 25 guns shot at the usual events. The evening was outstanding, as W. Lees shot his straight 20 and D. Hare his second straight 20 and they are both to be congratulated. The Schultz Cup event was won by J. Roberts, the Club event by A. J. Andrew, and the Mrs. Tuck's Cup event by H. W. Tidd. Owing to the full programme and failing light no American skeet was shot.

The meeting on May 30, again proved successful, when 27 guns were present. D. Purcell shot his first straight 20 and was congratulated by all the members. The Schultz Cup event was won by T. D. Bruce, the Club event by J. Wiseman, the Mrs. Tuck's Cup event by A. J. Foster and the American skeet event by A. J. Syms.

Wildfowling Clubs

The South Lincolnshire Wildfowlers' Club, together with their newly-formed Wainfleet branch held the first clay pigeon shoot of the season at the Sailors Home, Old Beake, Boston. There was a fine, sunny day for this social event, and although attendance was small everyone present was in high spirits. The shoot was scheduled to start at 10 a.m., but it was 10.30 before the first bird was smashed by Mr. P. Smith the Club chairman.

Event No. 1 was 5 birds down-the-line, and after some excellent shooting, the winner, after a shoot off, was Mr. Charlie Taylor, mine host at the Sailors' Home, the runner-up being Mr. R. Mumford. Event No. 2 was 1 bird crossing left to right, and this was won by Mr. D. Garrard who had travelled from Newark to attend, the runner-up in this event was Mr. P. Smith, and third was Mr. L. B. D. Brooks (Wainfleet branch chairman).

Event 3 was staged, 5 birds over-the-top; four members scored a maximum, and after the shoot off the winner was Mr. H. Harness, a Friskney member, runners-up being Messrs. P. Smith, R. Brown, and A. Harness. The last event of the day was 4 birds over-the-top in two pairs, Mr. Garrard was the first shooter and he scored a neat right and left the Messrs. Harness brothers also scored first time right and lefts, and the ultimate winner of this event was Mr. R. Harness.

Mr. John Creer and the club secretary, Mr. John R. Marshall, worked the trap and saw that everything was at the members' disposal. It was agreed by all that it had been a enjoyable days' sport, and everyone went home satisfied.

" King " was only good for clay " pitchens."

The Young Shot

That Trap Sprung

by Petrel

I DO not seem to be the only one suffering from brain fever as a result of trying to work out the instructions for building that rat trap described in the June 3 issue. They appear to have baffled everyone, including the army, but a R.A.M.C. captain to whose unit the matter of rat control in the Far East during the last war must have been a major headache, has sent me a description of a much simpler contraption used and recommended extensively in that theatre of operations. I call it " the greasy pole " trap, for reasons that will be obvious in a minute, and although my correspondent admits that it is clumsy, its great advantage is that there are no working parts and that it can be made from scrap with the aid of a clasp knife. The components comprise two square four gallon tins or five gallon oil drums, a stick, a piece of string and a bottle, the outside surface of which must be smooth.

You tie the bottle to the stick, push the stick through tin A and fill this tin with dirt or stones. Tin A is placed on bricks and the second tin B is arranged below the bottle and half filled with water. The bait (a piece of dripping is recommended) is pushed into the mouth of the bottle. The only points to watch are that there must be at least 5in. between the bait and the end of the stick, and tin B must not be too full of water.

Into the Drink

The rats walk the greasy pole to get at the bait and slip off the smooth bottle into the water. The captain concludes his letter by pointing out a further advantage possessed by this trap, for, as he says, it also provides an excellent reason for emptying quart beer bottles.

Another reader, searching in vain for the vital clue to construction of the complicated engine finally hit upon it after a friend had remarked that the instructions seemed a lot of Chinese. He writes; " The plan is none other than a Chinese wot wot, used in Hi Pong for catching that ever whistling bird which flies in ever tightening circles." Moreover he offers a reward of 1,000 cartridges for the capture of one these birds in one of these traps.

I hear the hammers of a thousand thwarted carpenters beating out a message of failure (not entirely unexpected) and I am thinking about using that box of cartridges myself.

Having laid all this bait, however, we may draw the inventor of the original trap out into the open, and perhaps he will let us see a photograph of his strange device. I could, I believe, have put such an engine to good effect last week.

When one is forever pottering about on rural business bent, usually little better tailored than Horace who guards my neighbour's peas, even one's friends are liable to cast doubtful glances in one's direction, as if wondering whether all can be quite right with someone who finds such pleasure in what to them appear such simple pursuits. But inevitably there comes a time when they are glad to call upon the services of that someone versed in these unsophisticated matters and as a result the odd, and sometimes dirty jobs, which come one's way are as many as they are varied. I was pleased and somewhat flattered when the next door gardener, who, I thought, knew everything, sought my advice on the setting of mole traps, and I was even more glad when he reported success at his first attempt along the runner bean trench, for with no mole run available at the time, the lesson had been hurried and makeshift. I was not so glad when his employer descended upon me just as I was sitting down to supper, with a request for aid in a search for his daughter's guinea-pig. As the daughter was away at school and the animal had been committed to his care, its recovery assumed no small importance and considerable urgency.

Ham-fisted Hamster

My knowledge of guinea-pigs is strictly limited. I do know that they fight amongst themselves and that rats will fight and kill them. I doubt, with so much grass at its disposal whether a single representative of the species would constitute the danger to his lettuces that my market gardener friend anticipated. But guinea-pigs and creatures of that ilk are obviously not to be trusted when at large, as witness the case of a golden hamster, given the run of the house, and discovered by another friend, climbing up the stock of his son's gun which stood in a corner, and " playing with the triggers." Another good reason this—as if we needed one—for keeping guns at all times well away from meddling fingers.

Nonetheless, or perhaps therefore, this particular creature had to be captured promptly, nor was the task trivial or simple, as you will appreciate if you have ever hunted such a swift moving animal through gooseberry bushes from which you were expected not to disturb the fruit and beneath which the nettles grew in rich profusion.

With a sensible, well trained dog, of course, such a task is simple, but here the accent is on sensible, for the hound required must be an animal which is really soft mouthed on all occasions whatever the discomfort it suffers, and I must admit to having owned few dogs which after one experience were prepared to treat a fighting rat with the same courtesy as a dead or placid bird.

I did once have a labrador which used to accompany us on sewage pipe ratting forays and would pick up and bring to hand the rats, bolted by thunderflashes and never turn a hair at his biting, struggling burdens, so that after every retrieve we had to bring out the bottle of T.C.P.

On this occasion, however, after all else had failed and two days had elapsed, it was, ironically, an alsatian with a mouth like a man-trap that brought the escapee to light, but as the dog belonged to the guinea-pig's owner, no blame for bruised ribs and flying fur could be attached to the willing helpers or their hounds.

The hardest mouthed dog I ever met was the one whose rear view graces this page. He was one of those unusual and ill-trained creatures whose only interest lay in retrieving unbroken " clay pitchens " as his Danish owner described them, and even these would dissolve into powder on being dropped at one's feet. Fortunately, perhaps, he would never dream of retrieving anything else.

Late flash. A strike delayed letter from a Birmingham reader has just reached me containing two excellent drawings of " that trap." Someone has, apparently, been able to follow those involved instructions and next week I will publish a picture which not only solves the problem, but also incorporates some improvements. In the meantime, no more letters on this subject, please. The trap is now closed.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Editor welcomes letters, and photographs relating to them, for this page. They should be as brief as possible, and the names and addresses of senders must be given, though these need not necessarily be published.

DISTRESS CALL FOR WILDFOWLERS

Sir,—I have read with great interest the correspondence regarding the above. May I point out that a "-Signal Distress Day and Night," of American manufacture is available. This consists of a metal container approximately 6in. long, which is divided in two, one half consisting of composition which, on ignition, emits a dark red smoke, and the other half consisting of flare composition. Both the smoke and flare composition burn for not less than 20 seconds.

The signal has the following advantages (1) It can be used either in daylight or darkness. (2) The igniter system is self-contained and can be easily operated. (3) Each composition has its own igniter system and can be used as required. (4) It does not require much carrying space.

R. J. LEWIS,
Wallis Street, Fishguard,
Pembrokeshire.

DUCK SHOOTING

Sir,—The period between the old time (August 12) and the new date of the open shooting season of wildfowl (September 1) is a period which I should very much like to ask all sportsmen, whether members or non-members of any wildfowl association, to observe to the full.

It is a common practice for some persons who are not fully acquainted with the Act, especially the time of the close season which dates between February 20 and September 1 each year, to take advantage of the shooting of duck before they are fully-matured, and, being unable to take care of themselves, therefore becoming easy targets for such persons. Most of these offences take place inland (not on the marshes, which are the natural homes of wildfowl) on sewage farms, reservoirs, drains, ponds and freshwater rivers. It is not the habit of wildfowl (and here I especially refer to the wild duck) to damage crops which they have been so frequently accused of doing, as they are surface-feeding birds, not like pigeons which alight and feed from the stocks of corn. Barley is the most attractive feed, especially when it is storm-driven and lying down. It is quite a common thing to shoot duck in August during the close season which is an offence under the new Act forbidding the shooting of such wildfowl.

Being advisor to The West Norfolk Wildfowlers' Association, to see the Act is carried out in full, it is my duty to report any offence which may come to my notice. The extension of the close period of the shooting season is for the protection of the late hatchings, and I strongly appeal to all sportsmen to observe the Act for the benefit of all wildfowlers who have the sport at heart.

MACKENZIE THORPE,
Sutton Bridge.

THE BREEDING OF CROWS

Sir,—Does the carrion crow breed in its first year? Or do its breeding habits more closely resemble the large raptors and flesh-eating gulls? Several keepers have assured me that the corby does, in fact, breed the season after it is hatched. Yet none has ever put forward facts in support of such an answer, and I remain unconvinced.

My idea that the crow is not a prolific breeder is not based on heresay, but on several seasons' observation.

One starts killing the crows some time before the nesting season is due to begin (how, is nobody's business), but let us hope a fair number are accounted for. However successful one is, there are usually from one to several pairs (according to size of the local crow population) which defy all attempts at persecution and build a nest. They can, of course, be dealt with then after the hen has started to sit, but at this time, when all "respectable" crows should be engaged in domestic duties, one stiil could find odd "loose" crows about which were fairly susceptible to a bait and quite obviously attached to no nest.

It is a common experience to locate a pair of nesting crows, put down a baited trap in the vicinity, catch a crow, think you have settled one of the partners until you see the original pair honking at you from a nearby ash tree. I have known this to happen time and time again. Surely this proves that the third crow is a young and inexperienced bird, whilst the owners of the nests are a pair of older hands.

I have had it admitted to me that these wandering crows are not attached to a nest, but have nested earlier and had their eggs destroyed. I cannot believe that a carrion crow is so easily robbed of its eggs by rooks, magpies, etc. And even if this had occured in an isolated instance, surely a second clutch would have been laid.

However, this cannot possibly account for the large numbers of crows I have killed after a given number of crows have elected to build on my ground and whose numbers have remained static until I have given them individual treatment.

I am not saying that a number of old breeding pairs may not be accounted for in the general campaign, before the eggs appear and the responsibilities of a family increase their cunning. Indeed, of the 61 crows I have destroyed this spring, only two pairs of these got so far as building a nest, although had these been left unmolested, I daresay there would have been a score of nests.

Mr. Imrie certainly raises a point concerning the placing of traps to kills, in relation to the new Act. There is sure to be, in view of the disappearance of the rabbit, an increase in the pheasant poults, partridges, and pigeon to be killed by stoats, therefore whenever we find a kill, we will naturally assume that a stoat is the culprit and set a trap accordingly, fenced in on three sides to ensure no wild bird is caught.

We know that the sparrow-hawk touches no kill, but her own, so the danger of catching a hawk is very, very small. If by some unfortunate chance we should catch a hawk and the leg is damaged, we would then be obliged to despatch the poor harmless bird as quickly and humanely as possible.

CERVUS,
Lincs.

Clearly seen are the entrance to the "earth" and the run leading to it. (See letter "Straw-Stack 'Earths.'")

WILDFOWLING CLUB IN ANGLESEY: SUNDAY SHOOTING

Sir,—I should like to reply to two letters on bird protection which appeared in the issue for June 3. One, headed "Proposed Wildfowl Club in Anglesey" the other, "Sunday Shooting." The necessity for a wildfowl club in Anglesey has been quite evident for the past two years, owing to the bird protection rot creeping in as a result of a certain section who, although ready to wound, were not afraid to strike providing no one recognised their source. For a considerable number of years I have visited the little town of Mattreath, enjoying myself more and more each year. But in January of this year I saw the red light and that something necessary in the sportsman's interest was long overdue, otherwise there would be wildfowling on Anglesey only for the favoured few.

Already the forestry land at Newborough has been acquired as a nature reserve, which means that shooting will be restricted there. And it was with crossed fingers that I listened to the wireless announcements a fortnight ago that a bird sanctuary had been made in Anglesey which, fortunately, did not affect us.

So come on all ye lads who shoot from the wall, and also the fellows who enjoy that genial hospitality so readily offered them at the little inn on the mouth of the estuary! Swell the ranks of the Anglesey Wildfowling Club! And hats off to the two people concerned for sponsoring it!

Before concluding, I would like to reply to J.M.C.'s letter regarding Sunday shooting. Whilst he is a bit late in the day with his information, for his benefit I would explain that the Huddersfield and District Clap Pigeon Shooting Association have been work-

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ing on this since March. Scores of letters have been written to various bodies interested. In addition, an objection was sent to the Home Secretary. As a result of this, I have now received a letter from the Home Secretary who states that he now does not propose to include birds in Schedule II, but has asked us if we still object to birds in the Third Schedule being protected. To this we have replied in the appropriate manner, and he is at present considering the matter.

J. BENTLEY,
Hon. Secretary Huddersfield and District Clay Pigeon Shooting Association, 333 Halifax Road, Hightown, Liversedge, Yorks.

STRAW-STACK "EARTH"

Sir,—On a number of occasions during a long life I have come across foxes breeding in old straw-stacks. A season or two ago, I found a vixen and her litter using an isolated stack which had gone almost to ruin. This was set right out in the fields. I took a small party of men with me and we forked the "rick" to pieces.

The vixen was shot early on during the proceedings, and five large cubs before we reached ground level. There were the remains in the "earth" of several chickens, three moorhen, the tail feathers of a cock pheasant, and some partridge feathers, together with an assortment of feathers from smaller birds, one of the rail family.

I was recently sent a photograph of a rather similar straw-stack "earth," and pass this on to you. The entrance to the "earth" is clearly seen, as also the run made by the vixen from the point at which she scrambled up from the ground.

T.B.,
London, E.C.4.

PIGEON SHOOTING CARTRIDGES

Sir,—I would put forward a suggestion about the supply of cheap cartridges for pigeon shooting, which I think is likely to appeal to sportsmen and cartridge dealers alike.

From chats with gun dealer friends, I think it is fair to say that the present method of supplying cheap cartridges for pigeon shooting through C.A.E.C.s is not popular and it has deprived dealers of small but legitimate profits on such sales, at a time when cartridge sales, due to myxomatosis, are probably at a "record low."

So far as shooters are concerned, many would prefer the cartridge and load of their choice, whether it be 7s or BB, Impax, or Alphamax, and to buy them through their normal supplier. In addition, who amongst us has not accidentally on some occasion, used an odd "pest" cartridge for an "illegal" purpose?

I therefore suggest that, in lieu of supplying cheap cartridges to pigeon shooters, the Ministry of Agriculture might issue "chits" or warrants authorising the purchase of cartridges from any dealer at a reduced price: for example the reduction might be £1 per 100 *on any make of cartridge*.

I am sure this would make us all better friends with our gun dealers, reduce work in the Pests Department and maintain the total cartridge sales. In addition, if operated on the basis of replacing cartridges used would give cheaper cartridges to those who have shot the pigeons and end some of the abuses, accidental and otherwise, of the present system.

R. W. STOCK,
Bishopsteignton.

ORGANISED PIGEON SHOOTS

Sir,—May I thank Mr. A. Stokes for his very fair and sympathetic attitude towards the "Toms, Dicks and Harrys." Exactly the same thing takes place here, with the cheap cartridges and invitations to shoot pigeon; the latter go to the selected few only. There is many a "Tom, Dick and Harry" who would dearly love the opportunity of having a shot at pigeon. I belong to the above "class" myself, and, as I have no official shoot of my own, I have to rely on other people's generosity, for the bit of shooting I get.

A friend and I make a practice of going round the magpies' and crows' nests every spring, by permission of the owner. This spring we shot seven magpies and 11 crows, one grey squirrel. We get no cartridge allowance for this, though we thoroughly enjoy the sport and we know we are doing a good job. I am sure a little kindness and sympathy shown towards the "small" man with no shooting of his own would be appreciated by him.

W. B. WEBSTER,
Thornton-le-Dale, Yorks.

SHOOTING NEAR THE HIGHWAY

Sir,—When after pigeon it sometimes becomes necessary to wait behind a fence bordering a highway. Many people imagine one cannot fire a gun within 40ft. of the centre of a highway, but this is not the case. It only becomes an offence if any injury or damage follows.

I am not quite sure about the exact wording of the law, but it is something like this. "It is an offence to fire a gun within 40ft. of the centre of a highway if any damage or injury are caused."

Obviously then the actual firing of the gun is not an offence unless it causes injury, etc. But one would have to make sure the road was clear before taking a shot.

F. M. BOYCE,
Blythburgh, Suffolk.

[A lengthy article appeared on this subject in *The Shooting Times* some months ago.—Ed.]

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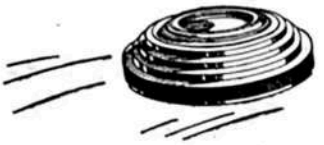

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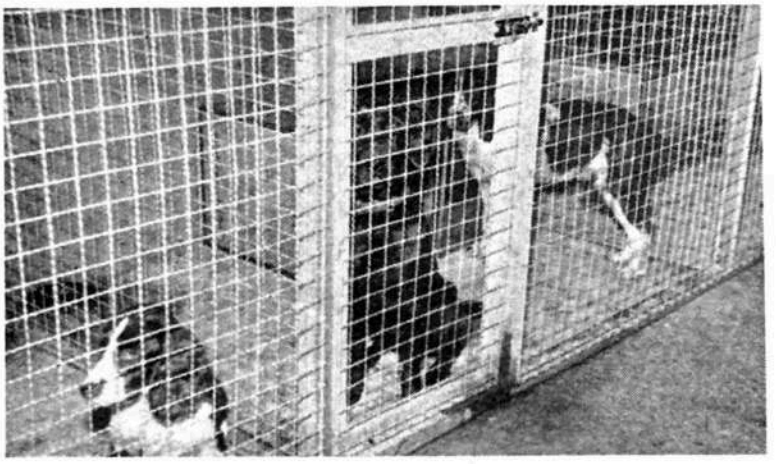
Gundog News

Conducted by P. R. A. MOXON Herne Common, Herne Bay, Kent

RETRIEVERS which will not retrieve, spaniels which will not hunt, pointers which will not point. All these problems come the way of the gundog trainer, and at the moment I am cursed with some of them in my own kennel. I have one spaniel which is a glorious quester, but which could not care less about retrieving, another which is a perfect retriever and simply will not hunt, a retriever which will do everything bar retrieve the dummy. Now comes a query from a lady reader of my book in Somerset, asking how she should deal with her show pointer which, though now over a year old, does not acknowledge the scent of game in the desired fashion. She writes as follows :

" Earlier this year I had another young dog which seemed to show promise from a show point of view, so I decided I would not wait too long before having him trained, and sent him to a trainer. He was thirteen months at the time and had been seen to point (but this may have been by sight). I was informed after a month that he was not pointing, though he had been walking up to game, which he knew to be there and would hesitate but not point. It was decided to carry on for a time because it was early days to say he would never point. However, the trainer has now told me that he is still not pointing though he scents game, and she says that he seems to have every desire to run as far and as fast as possible. . . ."



Woven wire panels make strong, attractive, and convenient kennels.

We all know that some dogs develop later than others—I have often quoted the spaniel which I owned which did not quest properly until over eighteen months old—and in the case of the pointer under discussion it may well be that the pointing instinct is somewhat retarded. However, the dog is bred from show strains and unfortunately in pointers, as in many other breeds, the working instincts of the show strains has tended to become dormant through lack of opportunity to practise them. Bird-dogs are not usually trained in quite the same way as retrievers and spaniels. That is, instead of teaching implicit obedience first, before being taken into the field, they are generally allowed — encouraged, rather — to range out and gallop about, getting all the scent possible into their noses and the chasing of small birds, game and even fur may not be discouraged at first. In most cases a good pointer or setter will start to acknowledge the scent of game in the approved fashion by the time it is nine or ten months of age. Some earlier, some much later. Other trainers, of course, believe in a strict course of " yard " (obedience) training first, but they are careful only to carry this out with keen dogs and in such a tactful manner that it will not inhibit their hunting and pointing instinct.

From a Stagnating Strain ?

My correspondent does not say if the dog in question has been yard-trained or if everything possible has been done to encourage it to point and hunt game without restriction. With a dog of average working instinct one would expect it to point by the time it was thirteen months of age, and providing that obedience work has not been overdone on this particular dog I suspect that it must be a member of one of the strains which has been allowed to stagnate from the working point of view. What to do about it, that is the question ? As my correspondent is keen to show the dog (and hopes ultimately to gain challenge certificates with it and, if it can be made to work, perhaps even a qualifying certificate leading to a bench title), it is probably worth persevering with.

I should suggest that all obedience work is temporarily dropped, and the dog allowed to range, gallop, chase and in general get all the excitement it can from game and birds. It is quite on the cards that one day it will suddenly stop, go rigid and exhibit a beautiful point. If it does, this should be encouraged by leaving it on point as long as possible, and thereafter trying to make it repeat the performance. To this end, it might be possible to introduce it to some penned game birds, failing which even rabbits, and to encourage it to point by " holding " on a lead or check-cord, in just the same way that Dick Sharpe used to recommend teaching spaniels to point. It is true to say that most dogs can be made to point after a fashion if taught in this manner, especially if they are keen to chase and are restrained from so doing by careful manipulation of the lead or cord.

A Book Recommended

There are many other possible means whereby this dog might be encouraged to point game, and I have recommended the owner to try to obtain General Hutchinson's book " Dog Breaking " which, though first published in 1849, is still in my opinion the finest manual on training bird-dogs, and also contains much valuable information applicable to all breeds of gundogs. One very obvious, but possibly not easy to arrange, idea might be to run this young dog on game with an experienced and reliable pointer or setter. If there is any natural instinct there it will probably take an interest when the older dog points, and it might even back it, but in any case there is every chance that it will imitate its schoolmaster and from thence on start taking a much greater interest in the scent of game.

As I have many times mentioned, jealousy among dogs can work wonders, and this "vice" has often been responsible for turning an indifferent worker into a good one. However, it does not always work, and in the cases of the reluctant retriever and indifferent hunter mentioned earlier in this article the examples of other dogs doing what I wish them to do has been completely wasted on the problem dogs. When this happens, other schemes must be tried out, but it is a consolation to know that with most dogs, particularly those of genuine working strain, time and experience will do the trick, always providing that the trainer does not lose patience and become exasperated, consequently doing something which will make matters even worse or even impossible.

Bedlingtons as Gundogs

We recently heard of a reader who used Bedlington terriers as gundogs, a fact which caused no little surprise to readers and also to myself. Another reader has since written telling me that he owns an Alsatian bitch which he finds excellent in the field. " She was two years old when she was given to me," he writes, " and was to have been put to sleep, and she did not even know the word " sit." She will now point, flush game, and retrieve, and allow me to fire over her head. I should very much like to know if any of your readers also use the German shepherd dog as a gundog ? "

The writer encloses a snapshot (unfortunately not clear enough to reproduce) showing his Alsatian bitch retrieving, and although she does not seem to be moving very fast, she is carrying in good style. It is always interesting to hear of unorthodox gun-dogs, and it seems that almost any breed, from corgis to poodles, can and do work with the gun with varying efficiency.

The subject of suitable housing for gundogs seems to arouse a good deal of interest among readers, and since making mention of the new kennels which I have just built in my old garage I have had several letters inquiring about adapting old buildings for this purpose. This is never so easy as starting from scratch with a new building, or one designed for the purpose, but it is interesting and adapted buildings can often make ideal kennels. There are, naturally, different views about the most suitable materials for flooring, partitioning and sleeping quarters, but in most cases these problems solve themselves by reason of availability, convenience or depth of purse. So far, I have found the woven wire, depicted in the photograph of one of the new kennels, extremely effective and strong and, being made to size on strong rod frames, convenient to fix, move and clean.

These wire frames, made in Kent, cost about one shilling and sixpence per square foot if bought in any quantity, are heavily galvanised and in varying gauges and meshes.

South Eastern Gundog Society

A training class was held on June 5, at Warren Farm, Boxhill, Surrey, by kind permission of Mr. Loveridge, several new members being welcomed. The two trainers were kept very busy, and the dogs were tested over varying types of ground. The next training class is on June 26 ; meet at Betchworth Village Hall, Betchworth, Surrey, at 3 p.m.

The Duke of Edinburgh shaking hands with Major S. E. Johnson, a member of the council of N.R.A. and President of the English XX Club. Behind Major Johnson is Lord Tedder, chairman of the council of N.R.A. The photograph was taken last year after the Duke had arrived by helicopter on the running deer range at Bisley.

BISLEY—1955 AND THE FUTURE

by Colonel Langford LLoyd

IN past years, I have set forth the history of the National Rifle Association and of the Bisley Imperial meeting held in July of each year, what they stand for and their value to Great Britain and the Commonwealth of Nations.

The Queen's Prize of £250 was first given by Queen Victoria in 1860 when the first prize meeting took place on Wimbledon Common and has been continued by every ruling monarch up to the present day. The conditions of shooting for the Queen's prize from the start have always been on similar lines up to the present day, the service rifle being used, and those conditions have set the standard for shooting throughout the Kingdom and the Commonwealth.

I have also written of Bisley and the Public Schools, and what the Ashburton Challenge Shield means to the schools of England who have authorised cadets. This year, after giving an outline of what will take place at the Bisley Imperial meeting and the visitors expected to compete, I propose to try and look into the future and visualise what the National Rifle Association may have to face when the new Belgian .300 F.N. automatic rifle becomes the general service weapon of the defence forces of the Crown, including the Home Guard.

Presentation of Prizes

The 86th meeting opens on the Bisley ranges on Monday, 4th July, and finishes with the final of the Queen's Prize on Saturday, July 16, and the prizegiving. The President, Field Marshal H.R.H. the Duke of Gloucester, K.G., etc., will be present on the final day and will present the prizes.

The week before the Imperial meeting opens the ranges will be occupied by the annual prize meetings of the Royal Navy and the Regular Army, whilst the National Smallbore Rifle Association will be holding their annual meeting on the Running Deer Range. The N.R.A. programme follows the usual lines, the first week being given up to matches shot at long ranges, 900 to 1,200 yards, with the match rifle fitted with special .303 barrels, optical magnifying or telescopic sights being allowed, usually fired from the back position to make for steadiness and accurate holding. Special .303 ammunition is supplied by Messrs. I.C.I., with a streamline bullet and a higher muzzle velocity than the normal .303 service ammunition.

Individual Competitions

The principal individual competition will be the Albert, shot on Thursday morning July 7, 15 shots at 900-1,000 and 1,100 yards, with the Elcho team match on Friday, July 8, at the same distances, between teams of eight from England, Scotland and Ireland, England being the holders. Ireland, who won this match on several occasions in the early days of the N.R.A., have not won it since 1907 and there is only one member of this team alive at the present time, and he is no longer shooting.

During the first week most of the competitions, individual and team, shot with the service rifle, as issued, take place. These competitions are designed to increase efficiency on the battlefield and include snap shooting, rapids and fire with movement. The principal individual competition being the Queen Mary, shot on Monday afternoon, July 4, and Tuesday morning, July 5, with the United Services team match under the same conditions, teams of eight a side, between the Regular Army, Royal Navy, Royal Marines, Royal Air Force, Territorial Army and Home Guard, shot on Friday morning, July 8, the Royal Navy being the holders.

The Public School competitions also take place during the first four days of the meeting, culminating in the Ashburton Challenge Shield team match and the Public Schools veterans' team match shot on Thursday, July 7. Eighty-eight schools competed in 1954, Allhallows School winning with the record score of 524 points ex 560. Uppingham are the holders of the Veterans' Challenge Trophy.

During the second week the ten competitions that form the Grand Aggregate are competed for. These are shot with the service rifle and service ammunition. The service rifle can be specially bedded to improve accuracy, the sling being allowed to steady the rifle whilst aiming, and an additional aperture backsight fitted, graded in minutes of angle for accurate adjusting allowance for windage and elevation—all these competitions are known as SR (b) and are deliberate and take place at all ranges from 200 yards to 1,000 yards.

The Queen's Prize

The principal competition for individuals is the Queen's, a gold medal and £250, shot in three stages. 1st stage at 200-500 and 600 yards, the top 300 shooting in the 2nd stage at 300-500 and 600 yards, 10 shots each range; the top 100 take their 2nd stage score on to the final stage, 15 shots at 900 and 1,000 yards. This final stage takes place on the afternoon of July 16. The first stage is shot on Wednesday, July 13. The team matches shot under SR (b) conditions are the Interservices XX match on Tuesday afternoon, July 12, and the county championship.

The National match, teams of 20 from England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales on Thursday afternoon, July 14. The Mackinnon, teams of 12 at long range from England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The Channel Islands and any representative team that may be at Bisley from the Dominions and Commonwealth on Friday afternoon, July 15, and finally the Kolapose for teams of eight from the Mother Country and representative teams from the Dominions and the Commonwealth and from the Channel Islands, on Saturday morning, July 16. The Mother Country won the Kolapose in 1954. The Home Guard, which has become an integral part of our defence force, may now enter a team for all interservice matches.

This year, representative teams are coming from Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia and Canada, and individual competitors from Australia, Pakistan, Nyasaland, Ceylon, Kenya, British West Indies and the Sudan have notified their intention of competing. It is possible that other places will be represented as well.

View of the firing line (small bore meeting, 1954) on the running deer range. Events here are always shot under cover.

The usual church service will be held in camp at 11 a.m. on the mid-Sunday. The Rev. J. N. Holland, Senior Chaplain, Royal Navy, will preach the sermon.

The Future

The N.R.A. may, in the not too distant future, be faced with a problem which may take some solving. From 1860 to the present day the conditions of the Queen's prize has dominated the conditions of the principal events at Bisley, and these conditions have decided the conditions of rifle meetings all over the British Empire and Commonwealth. These conditions have called for deliberate shooting

at all ranges from 200 yards to 1,000 yards with the service rifle and service ammunition. Before the Territorial Army came into existance entry to the Queen's or King's prize could only be made by serving volunteers and their entry fee was paid by their unit. Now entry fees are paid by competitors themselves and the Queen's prize is open to all subjects of Her Majesty the Queen.

Before I proceed further as to the difficulty that has to be faced, the majority who support the N.R.A. and who are members of rifle clubs throughout Great Britain and Northern Ireland, are those who are no longer of service age and it is estimated that there are more over the age of 40 than under that age who compete regularly at the Bisley meeting. These riflemen are keen on accurate and deliberate shooting at all ranges and are not inclined to go in for active service conditions with the rifle as issued, especially if the conditions involve fire with movement, i.e., running up the ranges on a time limit.

When the whole of the Regular Army, Royal Navy, R.A.F. and Territorial Army are armed with the Belgian F.N. .300 automatic rifle how will this affect the conditions of the Bisley meeting, especially as regards the conditions of the Queen's prize and the competitions forming the Grand Aggregate, which at present are the backbone of the Bisley meeting? Over 1,200 enter for the Queen's prize.

The N.R.A. has always been progressive in fostering all forms of rifle shooting — active service conditions, rapids and snaps were introduced many years ago, but these are not the basis of the main competitions.

Accuracy Questioned

The Belgian F.N. .300 automatic rifle is a magnificent active service rifle for close fighting, probably the best in the world, but its accuracy as a target weapon at over 500 is very questionable, and it could never be used in the Queen's prize at all ranges from 200 yards to 1,000 yards for accurate deliberate shooting as pertains at present.

It is realised that for a number of years to come, and for several years after the .300 automatic rifle is taken into general use by the Regular Army that the Home Guard will and must be armed with the present service rifle, known as the No. 4 S.M.L.E. rifle, which, when properly bedding, and used as a SR (b) rifle is a splendid target rifle for use at all ranges. So the N.R.A. may hope to base the Bisley programme on this rifle for some years to come, but what after that?

The N.R.A. must from a financial point of view consider those who find the greater part of the money required to run the N.R.A., and their wishes. No financial aid comes to the N.R.A. from the Government. The Army help by a yearly grant of service ammunition for the Bisley meeting and the loan of camp equipment on certain conditions, whilst all the services help to run the Bisley meeting by finding personnel, but the Bisley meeting costs £4,000 a year at least to run, not counting the value of the money prizes given, and this money comes out of the competitors' entry fees.

Looking Forward

There may come a time when sufficient .300 automatic rifles will be available to arm the Home Guard as well as provide a reserve in store to meet eventualities, and the present No. 4 rifle may then be no longer available and no longer recognised as an official service rifle. What then must the N.R.A. do? Especially to satisfy the desires of the majority of riflemen whose support is so necessary from a financial point of view and whose support must not be lost if the N.R.A. is to continue.

These riflemen desire deliberate shooting at all ranges, with an accurate service rifle, which the Belgian .300 automatic rifle will not provide —what then will be the conditions evolved for the Queen's prize, which conditions, up to date, have dominated club shootings and rifle meetings?

To meet the demand for an accurate rifle for long-range shooting, which would not interfere with the match rifle, a military rifle of any pattern, with iron sights, a sling, and a spirit level could be introduced as was included in the Bisley programme at the beginning of this century, but this rifle could not be allowed in the Queen's prize.

In 1919 and 1920 the King's prize was shot with the service rifle as issued. No slings, deliberate shooting, but did not go beyond 600 yards, but competitors demanded long-range shooting under conditions that made for accurate shooting that could not take place with the service rifle as issued, and in 1921 the conditions were amended in keeping with the wishes of the large majority of competitors.

A Question to be Answered

I leave the reader to work out the problem to their own satisfaction and the satisfaction of the riflemen who are the big supporters of the N.R.A. year in and year out!

In America, when the Springfield .300 rifle was the service arm of the American Army there was much deliberate shooting with this rifle at all ranges up to 1,000 yards, and even over, much under similar conditions as at Bisley.

This Springfield service rifle was a magnificent target rifle at all ranges, and was used by the U.S.A. team when they won the international match at the Olympic games in 1908 at Bisley, 15 shots at 200, 500, 600, 800, 900 and 1,000 yards, the team of six scoring 2,531 points out of a possible of 2,700, England, or rather Great Britain, using the long Lee Enfield were second with 2,497 points and Canada third with 2,439. The American high man made 430 points, Harcourt Ommundsen being top for Great Britain with 424 points. Several members of the U.S.A. team shooting with the Springfield rifle and their service ammunition, won prizes in the match rifle competitions at the Bisley meeting in the same year.

When, however, the Garand automatic rifle replaced the Springfield rifle as the service arm of America, deliberate service rifle shooting at ranges up to 1,000 yards was killed, and no longer form part of the annual meeting of the American Rifle Association held at Camp Perry, Ohio. Will this happen when the Belgian automatic .300 rifle is in general use in this country and in the Commonwealth?

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10-BORE D.B., under lever, Damascus barrels, 30in. hammer, 3in. chamber, £9.—Hardwick, 16 Coventry Street, Kidderminster.

16-BORE Hammerless ejector Purdey gun; cross-eyed stock. Price £80. Seen London.—Box A.2079.

WANTED

WANTED: a single or pair of Purdey 12-bore ejector guns. For sale, 410 3in. case hammerless ejector.—Thacker, Courtenay Buildings, South Quay, Worcester.

4-BORE Double wanted.—Box A.2080

DOGS

BLACK LABRADOR dog, 13 months, by F.T.Ch. Hilldyke Simon; thoroughly trained land, water, lovely disposition, 40gns.; also E.S. Spaniel, 12 months, bitch; untampered with; keen; due in season, O'Vara and Glennewton Prince breeding; 10 guineas and carriage. Particulars: Bell, Headkeeper, Condover, Shrewsbury

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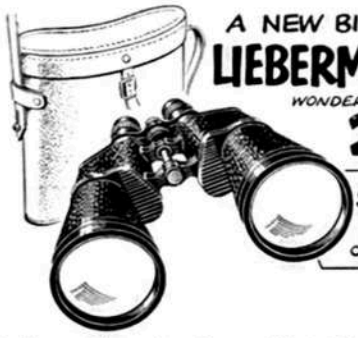

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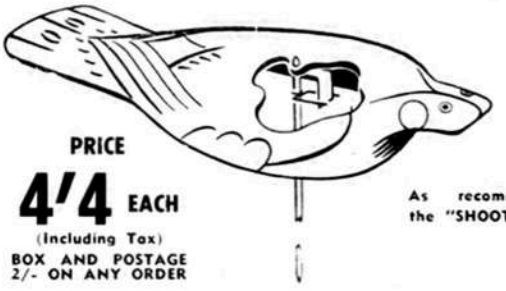

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